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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the "Global Workshop on Children with Disabilities in Developing Countries" held in Washington, D.C. in February 1997. The conference focused on children with disabilities in developing countries which encouraged networking, linkages, and partnerships. The conference was attended by representatives of more than 30 nations, people with disabilities, advocacy groups, nongovernmental organizations, governments, universities, and donor organizations. The two days of pre-workshop meetings, site visits, and presentations for participants from developing countries are briefly described. The workshop itself is summarized in the context of its four recurring themes: (1) family involvement for children with disabilities; (2) coordination of education and health programs; (3) public awareness and information sharing; and (4) protection and rights of children with disabilities. These themes are also addressed in summaries of the workshop's working groups, which focused on obstacles and gaps in services, resources, and strategies/next steps. Among the meeting's recommendations are worldwide implementation and enforcement of doctrines of equality and full access, disability awareness as a dimension of every development assistance program, public awareness campaigns, increased partnerships within and among nations, and a shift from a civil rights to a human rights perspective. A list of participants is attached. (DB)

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ED 423 642

Keeping the Promise

Reflections on a Global Workshop on Children with Disabilities in Developing Countries

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Foreword

Helping disabled people live independently and become fully participating, fully contributing members of society is not just the right thing to do. It is the necessary thing to do. Throughout the world, people with disabilities, their families, and service providers are striving to create policies, programs, and institutions that promote inclusion, not exclusion; independence, not dependence; and empowerment, not paternalism. I have seen many examples where nations are enacting strong legislation to promote these goals and where local communities are building the types of inclusive programs that can make a significant difference in the quality of life of a child with a disability, and of the adult that child will become. Although we have made considerable progress toward the full participation we envision, we have yet to achieve it fully.

In many parts of the world, people with disabilities live on the fringe of society, undereducated, underemployed, and either dependent on programs and institutions for their everyday living or cut off from society entirely. They and their parents and other family members experience economic hardship and social isolation. For many people, the road to economic and social opportunities and independence has yet to be built.

Children with disabilities have the same goals and aspirations as nondisabled children: to live productive and meaningful lives, contribute to their society, and enjoy the benefits of belonging. This cannot happen when society devalues children with disabilities and their families and, through disregard, pushes them aside to lead lives of poverty and isolation. Only when society opens doors to economic and social opportunities for disabled children and their families can their potential become reality.

In this spirit, the *Global Workshop on Children with Disabilities in Developing Countries* was convened in Washington, D.C., in February 1997. Participants came from more than 30 nations, representing disabled people, advocacy groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governments, universities, and donor organizations. They came together to identify and discuss effective strategies for enhancing economic and social self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities and their families in developing countries. Together, we exchanged information, built linkages, and forged partnerships to share our vision for children with disabilities throughout the world.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the U.S. Department of Education was pleased to be one of the sponsors of this Workshop. Its lessons, shared from the countries themselves, reflect the hope and promise that children with disabilities and their families can be included in the fabric of all societies. This is the promise; it is ours to keep.

—Judith E. Heumann

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"I have always had an interest in children with handicaps. My older brother had a mental illness. At that time you were never allowed to talk about it, not even in a whisper. It was a very stigmatizing condition for the whole family. The only time we were free of it was after my brother died, because in my culture no one speaks of the dead."

—Maria Kangere, Community Based Rehabilitation Alliance, COMBRA (Uganda)

Overview

Including children with disabilities and their families as full members of society is an old and ongoing challenge. Because children with disabilities have traditionally been "invisible," particularly in developing countries, addressing their needs is difficult. Even though the United Nations and other advocacy groups have worked for decades to protect and support children's rights, much remains to be done. Children are our future, and helping them is our privilege, our right, and our duty.

The Global Workshop held in Washington in February 1997 was part of a continuum of efforts, a new attempt to give children with disabilities and their families not only a voice, but a more secure future. Over 100 people came together under the leadership of the Disabilities Studies and Services Center (DSSC) of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to find ways to expand opportunities for children with disabilities and their families.

AED convened this Global Workshop to bring together, into a focused time and place, the diverse players—funders, grassroots practitioners, service providers, professional educators, parents of children with disabilities, NGOs, advocacy groups—whose joint efforts are needed to comprehensively address the challenge. The participants, many of whom have disabilities, came from every part of the world to discuss strategies for helping children with disabilities in developing countries—children whose needs are too often ignored or overlooked by governments and societies.

Part consciousness-raising, part advocacy training, and part strategic planning, the Global Workshop brought together the best thinking on the issues and interests of children with disabilities. The focus was on observing and hearing about best practices, on sharing what is working where, and on encouraging dialogue among key groups. Not until assuring participation for children with disabilities and their families becomes a consistent and integral part of government agendas and of development assistance can full membership in society become a reality for everyone.

The Workshop provided a forum that encouraged networking, linkages, and partnerships. People and agencies with successful experience in the field of children with disabilities came together with people from countries and regions where such efforts were just beginning. First-person descriptions of successful programs provided the audiences with tools to use and with exposure to the best existing practices and successful social policies—often at the grassroots level.

Participants identified gaps in social services and described practical solutions to fill those gaps. Some left with new skills and ideas to apply in their individual situations. Others left with national and international models of successful advocacy. All left with new ideas, hope, and determination. The Global Workshop was one important step in the effort to reduce the global economic, social, and humanitarian costs of ignoring the potential of children with disabilities. This report tells the story of the Workshop that brought so many key people together.

Welcoming the participants, **Stephen F. Moseley**, President and CEO of the Academy for Educational Development, spoke about the many resources needed to assure that children with disabilities and their families have access to education and employment opportunities. Such resources include information and knowledge to change public attitudes and awareness, community support to coordinate services and resources, and a public policy agenda that assures that both of these are present in every community.

Q: How do you remove negative attitudes toward children with disabilities?

A: Slowly. We can't remove them entirely, but it is getting better...We have a deaf person in our parliament now. We train parents that having a child with a disability is okay. We take them to visit another family with a disabled child. It goes very slowly. Not everyone changes.

—Maria Kangere, Community Based Rehabilitation Alliance COMBRA (Uganda)

At the Plenary Session, **Fay Chung**, the Chief of UNICEF's Education Cluster, discussed its commitment to special protection for disadvantaged children, with a specific focus on community-based rehabilitation. She mentioned "innovative UNICEF programs in many developing countries; for example, two good models of national community-based rehabilitation programs...with capacity building and training" in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. She also described UNICEF's focus on prevention of disabilities where possible through prenatal care, immunizations, and nutrition programs. "Our resolutions," she emphasized, "must be doable, and must be time-bound and measurable, so that we go beyond the stage of wishful thinking and move into the stage of practical implementation."

The World Picture: A Promise Unrealized

The growing numbers UNICEF has estimated that there are 150 million children with disabilities in the developing world, 80 percent of them in rural communities. It is well known that disability and poverty are strongly linked. For example, when children don't get enough to eat, it affects them both physically and cognitively. The babies of mothers who suffer from poor nutrition are at risk for physical and mental disabilities. But not all disabilities are preventable; there isn't always a "reason" for a disability. In many of the world's poorer nations, governments do not yet see the importance or the economic benefits of making funds, services, and initiatives available to *all* citizens, including citizens with disabilities, to give them the opportunity to be productive and contributing members of their communities. Agencies do not communicate, old ideas are hard to change, and services, where they exist, are often fragmented.

One Response: A Global Workshop

The challenge The idea for a Global Workshop began with a vision of how to expand social and economic opportunities for children with disabilities and their families in developing countries in the same way that opportunities have been expanded in the industrialized world over the past 25 years. Under the leadership of AED's Disabilities Studies and Services Center, a task force researched the needs in developing countries, prior activities and international doctrines, and next steps for promoting a global agenda on behalf of children with disabilities. Early in 1996 they produced a background paper, "Children With Disabilities: The World's Promise," and a year later, the Global Workshop became a reality.

The Workshop agenda was educational. Participants shared and learned advocacy and networking techniques, since there are still policymakers who need to understand that training and educating people with disabilities are important. Investing in individuals with a disability is a sound economic investment that pays off many times over, as people who would be supported by the state are able to become more economically independent adults. Agitation and pressure for changes from the grassroots level can enlighten and broaden the perspective of policymakers and politicians, persuading them to do things differently. Advocacy can change things.

The Participants: Keeping the Promise

The nations By all accounts, the Global Workshop was a success. One reason for its success was the synergistic mix of countries, parents, advocacy groups, and donors. Participants came from over 30 developing and post-industrial nations. They represented more than 31 advocacy groups. In addition, there were officials from 7 governments, as well as 17 NGOs. Developing countries represented were Brazil, Cambodia, Cape Verde, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, India, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Philippines, Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The experiences of participants from innovative grassroots programs, for example, in Romania, in Uganda, in Nicaragua, became resources for people facing similar challenges in other parts of the world. When development assistance takes disability issues into account, the results can change not only isolated lives, but an entire society.

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The sponsors and collaborators In addition to AED, an impressive group of sponsors funded the Workshop. These included the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA); the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development; and the Dole Foundation for the Employment of People with Disabilities.

Several collaborating organizations provided support for participants from developing countries or assistance in the planning of pre-Workshop and Workshop sessions. They were: the African Development Foundation; the Confederación Mexicana de Organizaciones en Favor de la Persona con Discapacidad Intelectual; Disabled Peoples' International; The George Washington University; Rehabilitation International; the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau; the World Bank; and the World Institute on Disability.

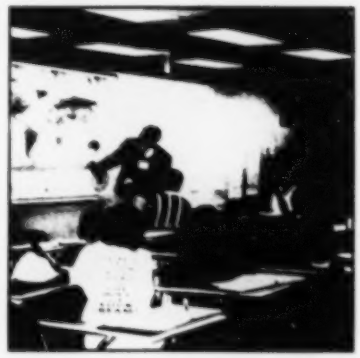
The Proceedings

The pre-Workshop activities The program began with two days of meetings, site visits, and presentations for participants from developing countries. They heard about empowerment, networking, advocacy in grassroots organizations, and NGO capacity-building. Participants identified barriers to full inclusion of children with disabilities and strategies being used to overcome these barriers, and identified priorities for disability advocacy in their countries and groups they could work with for change. As one attendee noted, "These activities exposed us to what actually happens on the ground."

A highlight of the pre-Workshop activities was visiting three schools in nearby Maryland that have a special focus on inclusive education and early intervention. Participants had a chance to talk with students and classroom teachers. The site visits were stimulating and made a deep impression on all involved. One government official from Uganda, hearing the history of the 30-year U.S. disabilities movement, with all its advances and setbacks, told an AED staff member, "I'm learning that everything doesn't have to be perfect—you can make a mistake and still move forward."

The visitors were particularly affected by the candor of one parent originally from Cambodia, the mother of a pre-school child with a disability, who talked about how she felt when she discovered the coordinated services the school offers young children and their families. "Finally I stopped focusing on my own pain," she said, "and was able to focus on helping my son."

Workshop participants listened, talked to one another, and shared ideas about what has worked for children with disabilities. In the words of one grassroots group of women in Zimbabwe, "United we bargain, divided we beg." Workshop participants learned how small groups can make a big difference. In Ethiopia, adults who are hearing impaired are working with hearing impaired children to help them get into school. In Nicaragua, a determined band of parents who have children with disabilities is changing life for their children through their tough advocacy. In Mali, a mother of two daughters with mental retardation started a parents' group some ten years ago. That group, AMALDEME, has become a successful training and advocacy organization. It continues to work with people with mental retardation at the village level, but also is active and successful at the highest levels of government.



"People are hungry for advocacy and hungry for change. They need our support."
—Charlotte Oldham-Moore, Mental Disability Rights International (Romania)

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AED's interest in children with disabilities grows out of 25 years of development assistance in the developing world, coupled with the deep commitment of the Academy's Disabilities Studies and Services Center (DSSC). **Carol Valdivieso**, Vice President and Director of DSSC, moderated the Workshop. In her words, "Global progress will take extraordinary collaboration and partnerships from developing and post-industrial nations, from donors and practitioners, from governments and community leaders, from parents and service providers, and from the most important voice—that of people with disabilities themselves."

People Talking to People

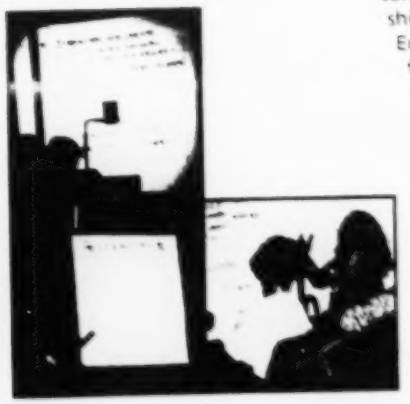
The sessions that followed featured several speakers who in their everyday life in developing countries are grassroots practitioners hip-deep in the issues of children with disabilities. The strength of these sessions was in the relevance of people talking to people, sharing their experience, energy, and hope as they described best practices and shared what had worked for them in their countries. Questions and answers followed each presentation. The sessions focused on the following four topics, which were recurring themes throughout the Workshop:

1. *Family Involvement for Children with Disabilities*

In the first session, a parent advocate and director of a Central American organization for parents of children with disabilities (CONCAPAD), and an executive of the Canadian Association for Community Living discussed their recently ended three-year collaboration in Nicaragua to promote social policy and help families and children with disabilities. They both emphasized that families need to be present at all stages of social planning and implementation, and that social planners have to consult with people with disabilities, who can offer them fresh insights and solutions. "'Participation' is not calling them in at the last minute to look over the plans," the speakers emphasized. "Professionals, no matter how much they care, come and go, but parents remain."

They noted that research shows that a stable civil society leads to economic development; as long as certain groups are excluded, there will be social unrest. Allowing people with disabilities to claim their rights makes good economic sense as well as good humanitarian and social sense.

A representative of the Christian Children's Fund explained how CCF serves children through "distant, but caring" adult sponsors. Community projects focus on large groups of children and typically continue from 10 to 15 years, with new ones beginning as old ones end. Under the sponsorship model, a child is sponsored directly, but the whole family is served. CCF projects in Eastern Europe include a supportive and educational four-week residential program in Latvia and Lithuania for babies with cerebral palsy and their mothers; a project in Albania that focuses on creating a system of community-based services for children with disabilities who were traditionally hidden away at home; and an effort in Estonia to move thousands of institutionalized children back to their homes and support them and their families through local community-based services.



2. *Coordinating Education and Health Programs*

A representative from the Ugandan Ministry of Education described her ministry's efforts to collaborate with health professionals and parents in supporting children with disabilities. She spoke about the national special education program supported by DANIDA that established educational and assessment centers in the 39 districts in Uganda, and the Technical Advisory Committee that is now coordinating disability issues in three government ministries. This group works with ministry task forces

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that reach out into local districts, working particularly in areas of sensitization, identification, assessment, and referral. Describing her program's accomplishments she said, "Mountains are being moved!"

Another speaker, representing the Ministry of Education in Nepal, talked about his country's special education program, which is being funded by private voluntary organizations and multilateral donors, including DANIDA. Nepal now has 24 special education schools, and the Ministries of Health and Education are working together to help establish an infrastructure for children with disabilities, building an integrated approach for services and programs. There is an effort to give all teachers four weeks of special training in disability assessment and screening, educational planning, materials development, and professional interaction around issues of disability. In Nepal, because the terrain is so mountainous that wheelchairs are often not useful, many parents have to carry their children, often for many miles, to clinics and to classes, adding another dimension to "access issues."

3. Public Awareness and Information Sharing

Lack of reliable information about disabilities is a real problem in many developing countries. Compounding the problem, people often have difficulty accepting or believing the information that *is* available. The director of the Mali Association for Prevention of Mental Deficiencies in Children (AMALDEME), supported in part by the African Development Foundation, spoke about changing attitudes toward disabled people in developing countries. One of the challenges faced in Mali and other traditional societies across the world, including places in the U.S., is the attitude that "nothing happens by chance," with the result that disabilities are often seen as a punishment of the family, perhaps because a family member broke a taboo.

AMALDEME is working to educate people and change attitudes. The organization has started an Early Intervention Center and is actively working with parents to get more children with disabilities mainstreamed. Community awareness outreach efforts, including a video about a village child who has autism, are proving successful. The government is supportive, helping to demystify children with disabilities through organizing support groups, educating mothers about their children's special needs, and providing resources.

Discussing ways to provide resources, panelists encouraged public awareness and information sharing as a means to foster positive community attitudes about childhood disabilities. One key to sustained family involvement is having a reliable source of accurate and appropriate information. The director of the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), funded by the U.S. Department of Education and housed at AED, talked about NICHCY's 20-year focus on providing good, useful, up-to-date information. The Center's mandate is to respond to requests for information about children with disabilities so that people—families, professionals, communities—can learn what resources are available and make informed decisions about what is most helpful for children. NICHCY's U.S. work has proven the day-to-day value of having a consistent information source that people can trust. But, the speaker stressed, success didn't come overnight. Nevertheless, she encouraged participants, "by working together, we can work faster, share information, and avoid the things that we found out through experience don't work."

From the other side of the world, an activist with Uganda's Community Based Rehabilitation Alliance (COMBRA) spoke about grassroots awareness activities in Uganda. COMBRA runs week-long courses to train people who will work with families

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"We can't have elites among disabilities, where some get services and some don't."

—Diane Richler, Canadian Association for Community Living

of children with disabilities. The organization teaches its trainers uses of appropriate technology and how to create devices with materials at hand, because resources are so scarce. Other COMBRA activities include information dissemination by means of a small library and through newsletters, and income generation through a small clinic. COMBRA has also worked with the media to encourage journalists to use positive terms when writing about people with disabilities.

There are major obstacles to the work this group is doing: the communities are very poor and in some areas people live in shanties. COMBRA works with families to create support groups. "We also try to get children with disabilities integrated into schools, but that is very hard, because the classes are very large—150 kids in each class." Community education is helping to overcome negative community attitudes towards children with disabilities.

COMBRA works through local councils and through chiefs, teachers, and church leaders to teach community awareness. It also educates parents by taking them on field trips to visit other families that have children with disabilities. Because local communities are so poor, helping people with disabilities is often a low priority, coming long after getting enough water and food. COMBRA has started a program to give mothers work to do at home so they can earn an income while they stay with their disabled child or children. Hearing about grassroots programs like COMBRA gave great encouragement to other participants with limited local resources.

4. Protection and Rights of Children with Disabilities

During the course of the Workshop, one of the emerging themes was that helping children with disabilities reach their potential is a matter of human rights rather than of charity. Support for the child and the family is a crucial first step to helping them move through the education system and, where necessary, the government agencies. This is true in Katmandu and in Managua and in Washington and in Bamako.

Two speakers focused on the protection and rights of children with disabilities, emphasizing that "children's rights are human rights." A legal researcher at the Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape (South Africa), told of her work with vulnerable groups in South Africa: "women, the elderly, the disabled, and people living in rural areas." She works on high-level policy recommendations for handling disability legislation and pointed out that "it makes no sense to have rights if people don't know they have them." Her statement reinforced the powerful role of information.

A speaker from Mental Disability Rights International talked about the action steps necessary to build disability rights for people with mental disabilities and retardation, principles that are applicable to similar groups. He shared the five recommendations from the Yale Declaration's Protection and Rights of Children with Disabilities:

- Recognize disability rights as human rights.
- Include disability rights in all programs, including civil society and democratization programs. "This is not just a policy matter," he stressed. "It is an international obligation."
- Promote locally based advocacy.
- Promote systematic adoption of best practices.
- Promote inclusive national and international planning for human rights enforcement and reform of services and support systems.

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The Working Groups

There is a contagious energy generated when people from different backgrounds, levels, and nations come together with resolve to find answers to common problems. Ideas are born, links are forged, and bold steps can be taken. The five working groups at the Workshop were discussion groups, each with a mix of people, including representatives from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, governments, international NGOs, parent groups, disability advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and representatives of research institutions and universities.

Findings The groups met for two half-day sessions to identify issues, hammer out strategies, and discuss ways to solve common problems. All the groups began by affirming the value of every human life, and emphasized the importance of mutual respect and collaboration among people at all levels—individual, community, national, and global. Each group then considered a specific theme, such as family involvement, coordinating services for social development, or the protection and rights of children with disabilities. They considered the themes in terms of obstacles and gaps in services, resources, and strategies and next steps.

1. Obstacles and Gaps in Service All five groups identified similar obstacles and gaps in service for children with disabilities in developing countries. Program planning and service delivery that ignore bad roads and unreliable communications in rural areas are unrealistic and doomed to failure. The most successful and visible programs are urban and typically make little or no attempt to reach the rural at-risk population, mainly due to lack of resources.

The "top-down" syndrome, which imposes policy and programs without grassroots collaboration, can lead to ill-will and mistrust toward donors and government agencies that are often seen as insensitive to the families of children with disabilities in rural communities, where nearly 80 percent of children with disabilities are found.

All five groups cited social and attitudinal barriers as persistent obstacles. In many cultures, old fears and prejudices, as well as stigma, cause parents to keep their children at home, either to protect them from harm or to hide them in shame. Ultimately, this practice keeps families from getting medical and educational support. Direct program support that opens up opportunities for children with disabilities is as important as prevention and health programs.

Programs targeted to a specific disability, gender, or religious group often result in further fragmentation of services to all. When donors and NGOs focus on one group to the exclusion of others, it can lead to division and isolation of certain children with disabilities and their families.

Similarly, "the charity perspective" of donors was seen as a major obstacle to creating real opportunities for children with disabilities and their families. Some participants felt that donors were too quick to embrace "hot" or "popular" disabilities without

At the Plenary Session, the Honorable **Benny Kimberg**, Danish Ambassador to the United Nations, put Denmark's human rights work into the context of the human rights work of the UN and of UNICEF. "We work to make things better for children with disabilities," he said, "because it's the right thing to do." He described the Danish model of support for the education of children with special needs in developing countries, and the successful work of DANIDA, with a focus on work with children in Uganda and Nepal. He said, "If parents do not understand and therefore do not support a special needs program, it is not likely to succeed. Involvement and education of parents should be directed not only at parents of children with disabilities, but at the parents of *all* children in a school to increase their understanding, to overcome their resistance, and to gain their support."

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considering family or community priorities. This approach leads to a constant shifting of focus and to programs that cannot be sustained. Perhaps more important, the focus appears to disregard existing community-based resources, leading donors to miss opportunities to fund such capacity-building activities as training local leadership in management and financial skills.

The groups also raised the issue that many programs may impose Western models in non-Western settings. Programs, if they are to succeed, must reflect the unique conditions and culture in which they are to work. Otherwise, predictable temporary setbacks that result from using foreign models with inappropriate features can end up being seen by families and communities as failures.

2. Resources In very poor societies, almost everything is a resource. Resources range from the natural support systems of families and communities, a continuing strength in many developing countries, to parents who know the needs of their children and can help design programs for them; to legislative actions that afford legal protection to children with disabilities; to the financial resources and technical assistance of donors, governments, and practitioners; to donors and governments that include children with disabilities in their strategic planning.

Accurate and current information was cited as a crucial resource for all sectors. Since information is power, getting, sharing, and using it are vital to affecting change at all levels. The working groups identified all kinds of information as important, including information about:

- A child's rights as a human being;
- Policies and laws that affect people with disabilities;
- Best practices and model programs;
- Resources available to families;
- Other children and families like one's own;
- Knowledge of the disability rights movement.

3. Strategies and Next Steps What concrete actions and strategies—from global planning to grassroots activism—are necessary in order to move forward and achieve the full social and economic inclusion of children with disabilities and their families in the world's societies?

The working groups identified the following as vital activities and steps to be taken in the future: *democracy-building; supporting associations and strengthening institutions at all levels; developing local management and financial expertise to foster accountability; and strengthening leadership and advocacy skills at all levels.*

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More specifically, the working groups agreed that:

- **The world community needs to implement and enforce long-standing international doctrines of equality and full access** at the country level. Efforts to promote accountability and reporting to help enforce these doctrines would be key strategies in overcoming the obstacles and gaps in service.

- **Disability awareness must be a dimension of every development assistance dialogue at every level.** Donor agencies need to address disability issues as part of development planning, program design, and funding.

- **Public awareness campaigns to inform and transform community public opinion** need to target politicians; families; professionals with political, economic, and social power; and societies.

- **Forging partnerships within and among nations must be encouraged to increase collaboration and cooperation** through networking, coordination of information sharing, and educational and training efforts.

- **Shifting from a "civil rights" approach to a "human rights" rights perspective is vital** to linking disability issues with a country's social and economic development agenda. Such an approach can be further strengthened by the merger of parent groups with human rights advocacy organizations.

The **Global Workshop participants committed to network regionally** when they returned to their countries, **to work toward the full recognition of human rights** and the implementation of the U.N. doctrines and resolutions, and **to advocate for political and legal action for enforcement** of the rights of children with disabilities and their families.

At the Plenary Session, **Judith E. Heumann**, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, reminded the participants that not all disabilities are preventable. "No parent ever *plans* to be the parent of a disabled child," she said, urging increased emphasis on working for inclusion of children with disabilities not only in education, but in all aspects of life. In arguing for their active presence in classrooms and in society, she stressed that all children with disabilities have the right to education, work, and other opportunities to develop their fullest potential.

"The family is the first and most enduring point of contact for children with disabilities."

—Suzanne Reier, World Institute on Disability

At the Plenary Session, **John Langmore**, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development at the UN, reviewed statements and international instruments that frame the design of programs in the field of disability. He renewed the UN commitment to place children with disabilities at the center of efforts to create "a society for all." "The international community," he said, "is committed to the principle of 'people-centered development,' which also means a 'children-centered' and a 'children with disabilities-centered' process of development." He noted that the Global Workshop reflected "a determination to remove the physical and social barriers that prevent children with disabilities from participating fully in social life and development."

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Summary and Reflections

The Global Workshop provided a forum that fostered networking, lini ages, and partnerships. People and agencies working successfully in th field of children with disabilities shared their experience with people fro countries and regions that are facing similar challenges. The Workshop brough participants together across country and sector boundaries to hear about glob "best practices" that are working for children with disabilities. Each person b came a resource; each country's best practice became a tool for others.

Donors and governments identified their financial and technical assistance resource recognizing their capacity—and responsibility—as policymakers to include children wit disabilities and their families in planning, and decided on strategies for the future. AE has always believed that real change and action will occur only when a cross-section c agencies and individuals from the disability and international development communitie agrees to work together. When people establish partnerships across systems, they can hel overcome the barriers that prevent children with disabilities from full participation in life The seeds of cooperation were sown at the Global Workshop, and the continuing enthusia tic and constructive response of participants shows that the seeds have indeed fallen o fertile ground. The harvest depends on all of us.

"Children's rights are human rights. Maybe that's easy to say, but children's rights in the developing world are not always included in planning."

—Zuweina A. Khamis, Association of the Disabled (Tanzania)

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In answering the question, "When will we know when disability issues are fully on the agenda for social development where they should be?" one person responded simply, "When, in my country, disabled people have a life like others."

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